Characters

- ELLA--A Sansei in her mid to late 20s.
- TOM --A Sansei in his mid to late 20s.
- SCOTT--A Yonsei, age 19-20.
- MILLIE--A Nisei woman, age 40.
- VICTOR--Her husband, a Nisei, age 50. He has flashback scenes to age 18.
- TAKESHI--A Nisei, same age as Victor; he also has flashback scenes to his youth.

Act 1

The theater is in darkness. A spotlight prowls the stage, then stops upstage center. ELLA, TOM, SCOTT appear in the light. They are dressed in a neutral unisex look.

ELLA

This is Manzanar.

TOM

The Manzanar of our minds.

SCOTT

I can't imagine.

TOM

That's the trouble with you. A feeble brain, it feels no pain.

ELLA

That's not fair. This is the first time for him--out here.

SCOTT

Out here? Out where?

TOM

Look around you! What do you see?

SCOTT

Nothing.

(A beat)

Well, I see the audience, but that's all, and they don't see anything either.

TOM

Use your imagination. Where 576 barracks once stood, there are now sagebrushes and naked trees.

ELLA

The land is beaten and warped and cracked. The icy winds from the High Sierras chill the ghosts of the past and pummel the pilgrims of today.

Tom makes the sound of howling winds. Ella shivers and rubs her hands up and down her arms. Scott shivers involuntarily.

ELLA

(CONT˙)

The geographical Manzanar is a desolate square mile area, a five-hour drive from Los Angeles, between Lone Pine and Independence.

TOM

In World War II, 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were interned in relocation centers by Executive Order No˙ 9066, issued on February 19, 1942.

ELLA

Manzanar, one of 10 concentration camps, was bounded by barbed wire and guard towers, confining 10,000 persons, the majority being American citizens.

TOM

Our story tonight concerns three of those Americans.

SCOTT

What three?

TOM

Any three. Doesn't matter.

SCOTT

We have to be fair.

ELLA

Three Nisei. Pilgrims to Manzanar.

SCOTT

Why Nisei?

TOM

Because they were the link between Japan and America. Their parents were from Japan, but the Nisei's future was in the U˙S˙ If they fail, we fail. They were the test of Americanism.

Ella brings out a black top hat.

ELLA

We'll pick out three names.

TOM

Stick your hand in. Don't look.

Scott puts a hand into the hat and pulls out a piece of paper.

SCOTT

Takeshi Miyahara.

Tom pounds the taiko drum.

TOM

Takeshi Miyahara!

Scott pulls out another name.

SCOTT

Millie Kimura!

Tom hits the drum again.

TOM

Millie Kimura!

Scott digs out the last name.

SCOTT

Victor Kimura.

Tom beats the drum once more.

TOM

Victor Kimura!

ELLA

All right!

Ella shows that the hat is now empty and puts it on her head.

TOM

This will be the story of Victor, Millie and Takeshi, three Nisei-Americans of the second generation, their lives and nobody else's!

ELLA

As presented by two Sansei and one Yonsei--Americans of the third and fourth generation! Ella!

She tips her hat and bows with a flourish.

TOM

Tom!

Tom and Ella now look at Scott, who is impassive.

TOM

(CONT˙)

Come on, you too, Yonsei.

ELLA

Say your name. That's all.

SCOTT

Scott.

TOM & ELLA

SCOTT!!

ELLA

Time to clean out the cobwebs and chase away the spiders. Summon the pilgrims.

SCOTT

Wait! What year is this?

ELLA

The year is 1973, the day April 14. Manzanar is dedicated as a state historical landmark--No˙ 850.

TOM

Come on, pilgrims!

Tom starts beating the taiko drum, a strong, thundering rhythm that builds in intensity. Ella uses wooden clappers, as in Kabuki. Near the conclusion, Millie and Victor emerge upstage center. The drum and clappers climax in unison. The Sansei and Yonsei freeze in their positions.

MILLIE

Amazing. Some of the barbed wire is still here after all these years.

VICTOR

The hakujins will go crazy when they find out about this pilgrimage.

MILLIE

No, they won't. It's different nowadays. I'm glad we came.

VICTOR

I should've gone fishing with Ronnie.

MILLIE

I haven't been here since I was a little girl.

VICTOR

That's the trouble. You were only a kid, you don't remember a damn thing.

MILLIE

I do, too. I know exactly where all the guard towers were. I checked each place.

VICTOR

A no-man's land, that's what this place is.

Victor zippers his jacket.

MILLIE

Chilly, huh. I remember the winds used to blow so hard and whip the sand and dust against my legs. It really hurt.

Millie shivers and stomps her legs on the ground.

VICTOR

That kind of hurt was nothing. A kid with simple pain.

MILLIE

I was scared of the spiders and scorpions around here.

VICTOR

I'm not coming here no more. You'd think people had enough of this place. Now they make it a landmark. Why remind people of those days?

MILLIE

Oh, Victor, you sound like an old man.

VICTOR

What's that?

MILLIE

I said you sound like...

VICTOR

No, no, can't you hear? Some woman is giving a speech or something. Over there, see, on the platform.

MILLIE

Too far to hear.

VICTOR

What the hell is she saying? She better not say anything crazy. It might get in the papers, then what?

MILLIE

Well, why don't you go check it out, ojisan.

VICTOR

You coming?

MILLIE

No, I'll wait here.

VICTOR

Okay, I won't be long.

Victor exits left. Millie sits on a platform. Ella bangs the clappers once and they unfreeze.

SCOTT

What's happening over there?

ELLA

You know, speeches, a ceremony.

SCOTT

I want to know what she's saying too.

TOM

You and Victor?

SCOTT

Yeah.

TOM

Ella, give him an excerpt at least.

ELLA

Okay, just the ending.

(A beat)

"Today the person in charge of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is the same person who was in charge of the relocation centers for Japanese during World War II. He must know like we do that it doesn't matter whether you call it a reservation or a relocation center, it is in reality a concentration camp. And today we must realize that Manzanar is right now, this minute, our Wounded Knee. If we support one, we must support the other. It's the same struggle with many fronts."

SCOTT

Victor's not going to like that speech.

TOM

That's his problem.

SCOTT

I wonder what Millie's thinking?

ELLA

Go talk to her and find out.

SCOTT

That's not the way it works.

ELLA

Look, we make up our own rules. You talk to her and she'll answer. It'll be like she hears a voice in her head. That happens to everybody. You talk to yourself all the time.

SCOTT

So that means somebody wants to know what I'm thinking?

TOM

In your case, it might be futile. But you never can tell. Go ahead. She has a lot to say. We'll get it out of her.

SCOTT

Was it terrible here in Manzanar? The upheaval, the living conditions?

Millie doesn't look at the trio when answering.

MILLIE

Terrible? No, not terrible. Actually I enjoyed myself in Manzanar.

TOM

You don't mean that.

MILLIE

Well, I was sad once.

TOM

Yes, tell about that time. That was terrible. It was a traumatic experience for you.

MILLIE

Oh, I don't know about that. I had found an injured bird, so I took care of it and kept it in a cage. But my father said I should let it go free. I didn't want to. I said, "The bird is safe in the cage. The other animals can't hurt him. He's happy this way. I'll protect him." But my father said, "Mieko, the bird is dying of sadness. He doesn't sing. Let him go. Let him be free. Do what is right."

Millie acts as if there is a bird in her cupped hands. She looks up at the sky, lifts her hands into the air and watches the "bird" fly away. Tom makes the sound of a happy bird in flight. Ella, Tom and Scott look upward to watch the bird fly away, momentarily entranced.

SCOTT

That was her traumatic experience?

TOM

Of course not. Be patient.

Victor and TAKESHI enter from left.

VICTOR

Millie, look who I found.

MILLIE

Takeshi!

TAKESHI

Hello, Millie.

VICTOR

He's living in Torrance now.

TAKESHI

I've been in London the past few years. Just got back.

VICTOR

He was teaching karate.

(To Takeshi)

Damn, teaching karate. Aeh, don't forget I used to be your sempai.

Takeshi bows formally to Victor, who returns the courtesy.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

I always used to beat you in kumite. You gotta admit that. The double roundhouse kick-I got you once, remember, above the right eyebrow.

TAKESHI

The left eyebrow. I got the scare to prove it.

VICTOR

Mark of honor.

TAKESHI

The mark of inexperience.

VICTOR

I wanna come down to see your new dojo.

TAKESHI

It's not a big place. You'd be disappointed.

VICTOR

Couldn't be as bad as the place where we used to train in the old days. Hey, maybe I should start training again?

TAKESHI

When did you stop?

VICTOR

Well, let's see, hell, it was here. When I came to Manzanar, I stopped.

MILLIE

How come?

VICTOR

Hell, who could train then with all the commotion?

MILLIE

You were probably too lazy.

VICTOR

Lazy? Takeshi, tell her how good I was.

MILLIE

(To Takeshi)

Look at him. I can't believe he used to be a karate man.

VICTOR

I made sho-dan in three years.

SCOTT

What's shodan?

TOM

First degree black belt.

MILLIE

What rank are you, Takeshi?

VICTOR

Third degree, I bet.

TAKESHI

Go-dan.

VICTOR

Fifth degree black belt? Damn! If I had continued, I'd be sixth degree by now.

MILLIE

Is that what you do for a living, Takeshi, teach karate?

TAKESHI

Yeah.

VICTOR

What are you, a dedicated nut or something?

TAKESHI

Well, after I trained in Japan, I...

VICTOR

Japan? I didn't know that.

TAKESHI

In Tokyo, at the Shoto-kan headquarters.

VICTOR

No kidding. I was the one who wanted to go to Japan to study karate.

TAKESHI

Yeah, before the war, we talked about it.

VICTOR

I was going to come home a karate master. I could've done it. I was good enough, you know that.

TAKESHI

Then the war dropped on us.

VICTOR

Yeah. No way I was going to Japan then, those Jap bastards.

MILLIE

Victor! Your language.

VICTOR

It's only Takeshi, what the hell. He knows me. I haven't changed, right?

TAKESHI

You're still the same.

VICTOR

Hey, I'm in pretty good shape too.

MILLIE

Don't believe him.

VICTOR

How 'bout we do a little kumite right now, eh?

Victor strikes a karate stance.

MILLIE

Don't hurt him, Takeshi. He doesn't know the meaning of exercise.

VICTOR

I get all the exercise I need in bed.

Victor gives Takeshi a sly smile.

MILLIE

Oh God.

VICTOR

They treated you okay in Tokyo?

TAKESHI

Yeah, but the training was tough.

VICTOR

Bushido spirit and all that shit?

TAKESHI

Yeah, something like that.

TOM

Time for them to go.

MILLIE

Are you married?

TAKESHI

No.

VICTOR

No kids? How you gonna pass along your genes?

TAKESHI

How's your boy? Must be grown up by now.

VICTOR

Yeah, typical Sansei kid. Don't know what he wants to do.

TOM

Aeh, Victor, Millie, we're going.

VICTOR

Right.

(To Takeshi)

We came with some friends.

MILLIE

Bye, Takeshi, we'll invite you over for dinner, okay?

TAKESHI

Sure, thanks.

VICTOR

Gotta get out of this place. Too many rabble rousers here. See you.

Victor and Millie exit upstage center.

SCOTT

Why didn't Takeshi ever marry?

TOM

He had a girl in camp.

SCOTT

What happened to her?

TOM

Nothing. She dragged him down, so he dusted her off.

ELLA

It wasn't like that.

Ella gets a puppet and puts on it the mask of a young Nisei woman.

ELLA

(CONT˙)

The girl's name was Kiyoko. She loved Takeshi. Romance in Manzanar.

Ella moves to Takeshi with the puppet. Lighting should indicate the past.

KIYOKO

Takeshi, I don't know what to do. I hate it here, I hate it.

TAKESHI

Don't feel sorry for yourself. Do things, keep busy, study.

KIYOKO

No. Why should I? There's nothing left for us.

TAKESHI

Try to go to Chicago. Get out.

KIYOKO

And leave my parents and sisters? What for?

TAKESHI

Don't give up, Kiyoko. That's the greatest danger--doing nothing.

(A beat)

I'm going into the Army.

KIYOKO

Don't leave me. Not now.

TAKESHI

We'll meet after the war. In Chicago. Go there. Find a job.

KIYOKO

We won't see each other again.

TAKESHI

Yes, we will. Don't lose hope.

KIYOKO

I'm scared.

TAKESHI

We'll be okay. I promise.

KIYOKO

If I go to Chicago, will you write me?

TAKESHI

Of course. And someday we'll get married. That is, if you don't mind being tied down to a struggling poet.

KIYOKO

It can't get any worse than this, can it?

TAKESHI

No, it can only get better.

ELLA

(Putting away puppet)

And so, Takeshi went into the Army and Kiyoko went to Chicago. But one day she was crossing a street, wearing a flower in her hair, and she was hit by a drunk driver, and she died. Takeshi and Kiyoko never met.

(To Tom)

That's the way it happened.

TOM

Okay, that's the way it happened.

SCOTT

Wait, I got a question for Takeshi.

TOM

Be my guest.

SCOTT

Was Victor a good friend of yours?

TAKESHI

We trained together in karate when we were kids.

TOM

Was he better than you?

TAKESHI

He was my sempai. He started training before me. I worked hard to catch up.

As Takeshi is exiting stage right, Victor rushes in his old karate gi.

VICTOR

Takeshi! Let's go! Get your ass moving. Sensei will be here soon.

ELLA

(To Tom)

Go get the sensei.

Tom goes off upstage.

VICTOR

And don't forget to sweep the floor before we begin.

TAKESHI

(OFFSTAGE)

I already did it.

SCOTT

What year is this?

ELLA

December 7, 1940.

Victor is warming up.

TAKESHI

(OFFSTAGE)

Aeh, Vic, when do I learn Kanku Dai?

VICTOR

Get your basics down first. Remember what Sensei said. Build a strong foundation and you build a solid technique that won't crumble under fire. Keep practicing your Heian forms.

TAKESHI

(OFFSTAGE)

I can do those in my sleep.

VICTOR

That's the trouble. You move like a zombie. Your form's weak, just like your spirit.

Takeshi comes out in his old gi and brown belt. Victor is doing some karate movements.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

Sensei feels you need a lot of work yet.

TAKESHI

You think Sensei might let me take the black belt exam next month?

VICTOR

Be serious. You got a long way to go.

Tom enters from upstage with Sensei puppet.

SENSEI

Kimura-kun, hajime.

VICTOR

Hai, Sensei.

Victor and Takeshi sit facing Sensei puppet.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

Mokuso!

Victor and Takeshi close their eyes.

SCOTT

What're they doing?

ELLA

Meditating.

TOM

Clearing their heads of all the crap in the world and purifying themselves for karate training.

ELLA

That's what we Sansei should do more of.

SCOTT

What, karate?

ELLA

No, meditation. There're too many distractions. Sometimes it really gets you down.

SCOTT

Hey, I'm okay. I'm happy. I belong.

ELLA

Belong where? To what?

SCOTT

I belong in the mainstream of America. I can go as far as I want to go and I can do whatever I like. I'm not bound by race, heritage, tradition, stereotype. I'm free as a bird.

ELLA

In a gilded cage.

VICTOR

Ya-me!

They open their eyes.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

Sensei ni rei!

Victor and Takeshi bow to the sensei.

SENSEI

Victor, do Basai Dai.

VICTOR

Hai.

Victor stands ready.

SENSEI

Yoi. Hajime!

Victor begins Basai Dai. Sensei sings a karate song for the kata (form). When Victor is finished, he stands ready.

SENSEI

Ya-me!

Victor now relaxes.

SENSEI

(CONT˙)

Miyahara-kun!

TAKESHI

Hai!

SENSEI

Today you will start learning Kanku Dai. And next month you will take black belt examination.

TAKESHI

Yeah? Thank you, Sensei.

VICTOR

Ah, Sensei, not too early for him for black belt?

SENSEI

No, why?

VICTOR

He only trained little over two years.

SENSEI

(Looking at Takeshi)

You ready for black belt?

TAKESHI

Ah, yeah, Sensei, I'm ready.

SENSEI

Good. No modesty. Just honesty. Get ready for kumite.

Victor and Takeshi get together to warm up.

VICTOR

You better train harder if you want to pass the exam. Too fast for you to get your black belt.

TAKESHI

Well, it's an exam, right? Maybe I won't pass.

VICTOR

You gotta earn it.

TAKESHI

I will.

VICTOR

You know in the exam you have to kumite with me.

TAKESHI

Sure.

(In mock seriousness)

Hai, Sempai, thank you for honoring me. Please do your best against me and teach me your strength.

Takeshi bows ceremoniously.

VICTOR

Aeh, what're you trying to do, go Japan on me? Okay, you watch my hands and feet. When they move, I'm coming after you. Easy as that.

TOM

I love this. Like taking the lamb to slaughter.

ELLA

Sly old Victor, at such a young age.

SCOTT

Victor's trying to help, what's wrong with that. He doesn't think Takeshi's ready. Maybe he's right.

Tom as Sensei takes his place between the two combatants.

SENSEI

Kumite. Yoi. Hajime!

Victor and Takeshi bow to each other, then square off into karate stances. The two styles are different.

Victor, the more experienced, is confidentally still, except for his feet, which he occasionally shifts slightly on the floor.

Takeshi is more nervous. He is more closed in, appears tightly wound up in his movements, even shifting to a southpaw stance once, but that doesn't faze Victor.

Takeshi makes an attempt to punch Victor with an Oi-zuke. Victor backs off slightly, blocks the punch easily; there is a flurry of punches and kicks. They separate. Sensei, in the middle like a judge, signals them to go again.

They circle each other, with Takeshi doing most of the moving and faking. Victor makes a quick fake with a punch, which Takeshi goes for, but Victor quickly changes and comes in with a roundhouse kick straight into Takeshi's solar plexus, a clean hit, which takes the breath out of Takeshi. Sensei separates them, then extends an arm outward and up toward Victor to indicate a score.

SENSEI

Ippon!

Takeshi fights to get his breath back. Victor exits left.

SENSEI

(CONT˙)

You okay?

TAKESHI

Hai, Sensei. Okay.

SENSEI

(To Takeshi)

What you trying to do? You crab or something?

Sensei makes crablike movements across the floor.

SENSEI

(CONT˙)

You waste too much energy in useless movement. Your eyes are watching where? Don't look at his hands and feet? No good. Victor fake with his hand and you went for that movement. But if you watch his eyes, you would know that was not his main attack. Always watch the eyes. Understand?

TAKESHI

Hai. Sorry, Sensei, I'm a slow learner.

SENSEI

That's okay. Just don't give up. If you continue to practice, you will become better than Victor. I may be dead when it happens, but it will happen.

TAKESHI

Sensei, can I ask you a personal question?

SENSEI

Yes.

TAKESHI

You thinking of returning to Japan?

SENSEI

No, why?

TAKESHI

Well, with all the things you read in the papers nowadays about Japan and America? I thought you missed your home, your country.

SENSEI

Is Japan your country too?

TAKESHI

Japan? No, Sensei, America is my home.

SENSEI

But you want to learn Japanese martial art?

TAKESHI

Only because you are a good teacher.

SENSEI

When I left Japan, I told Funakoshi sensei I wanted to teach karate to Americans. Not as a weapon of war but as a sport, an art. In karate you learn self-discipline, courtesy and honor. It is a good bond for friendship. Understand?

TAKESHI

Hai.

SENSEI

Someday you will be a good karate sensei.

TAKESHI

I think I'm going to be a writer, a poet. I'll be attending UCLA next year. An English major, I hope.

SENSEI

That's good.

TAKESHI

Sensei, you want to hear a haiku I wrote?

SENSEI

Oh. You write haiku too?

TAKESHI

Just a little. How's this? "Snowflakes fall today, The winter will be longer. A silence in white."

SENSEI

Hmmm. Someday you will make a good karate teacher.

Takeshi smiles.

TAKESHI

If you say so, Sensei.

Takeshi bows to the sensei and exits right. Tom places the puppet minus the mask upstage in a slot.

SCOTT

Did the Sensei really say those things?

TOM

Of course. You think I would make it up.

Millie enters from stage left. Victor follows, wearing a loose bathrobe. Underneath he wears an undershirt and striped boxer shorts. He goes through some basic karate movements.

MILLIE

Didn't Takeshi look great? All that karate training paid off.

VICTOR

Fifth degree black belt. You know if I...

MILLIE

What're you doing?

VICTOR

Karate.

MILLIE

That's karate?

VICTOR

Yeah. What's so funny?

MILLIE

Nothing. It's just that you look...

VICTOR

It's this bathrobe.

Victor takes off the robe and resumes his karate movements stiffly. He still looks ridiculous.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

See, I don't want to strain myself. The muscles are stiff. It's not like golf. You don't use the same muscles. Damn. So stiff.

(A beat)

I was thinking. Maybe I'll take up karate again.

MILLIE

At your age?

VICTOR

What do you mean, my age?

MILLIE

All you men, when you reach middle age, I don't know what happens to you.

VICTOR

Hey, I'm not middle age.

MILLIE

You act like it.

VICTOR

In what way?

MILLIE

In every way. From when you get up till you go to bed.

VICTOR

I work like a dog, that's what I do.

MILLIE

That's all you know how to do.

VICTOR

What more do you want from me?

MILLIE

If you have to ask... never mind.

VICTOR

You just don't know. In my youth I was better than Takeshi. I was tough. I could wipe the floor with him.

MILLIE

Don't exaggerate.

VICTOR

You never saw me in my prime.

MILLIE

I hope I didn't miss much.

VICTOR

If I went back to training, serious training, I bet I could beat Takeshi again.

MILLIE

Oh, be sensible. After one week, I'd have an invalid on my hands.

VICTOR

Look, if the time comes when I can't take care of myself, just shoot me, okay?

MILLIE

Don't be so... it's just that you've led a very sedentary life for too many years.

VICTOR

I told Takeshi I was coming back.

MILLIE

Oh God.

VICTOR

Don't give me a hard time, okay? My mind is made up. I mean it. I'm going to beat Takeshi again. I have to do it. You don't understand. I'll be like I used to be--before the war.

Victor grabs his robe and exits left.

MILLIE

Before the war. Before the war. Before the war I had nobody. The war brought my family together.

ELLA

Are you sure, Millie?

MILLIE

Yes.

ELLA

How? Why?

MILLIE

I was the youngest of four children. And the only daughter. My mother caught TB right after she gave birth to me. They took her away to a TB hospital and I never saw her--until one time. My father couldn't take care of me, so he sent me to an orphanage for Japanese children in Los Angeles. My three brothers stayed with my father. When the war came, I was six or seven. They sent us all to Manzanar. Even the children in the orphanage. I was reunited with my father and brothers. All because of the war.

Millie exits left. Ella begins singing "Aloha Oe." She places the Hitler and Tojo puppets in slots upstage center.

TOM

Good morning, rise and shine all you sleepy heads. It's 8 a˙ m˙ in beautiful Honolulu, December 7, 1941.

The stage is now flooded with red lights. Scott hits a stage left drum with a boom. Then another BOOM. The drum beating increases in tempo.

TOM

What's going on? What? We're being bombed? This is no drill. Those are real bombs. The Japs are bombing Hawaii! This is no drill! The Japs are bombing Hawaii!

Ella makes the sound of air raid sirens. Tom goes to the stage right taiko drum and beats it furiously. The drums beat out a thunderous rhythm. At the climax all lights go out. There is a moment of silence, then the spotlight hits Ella holding the Hitler puppet in her arms. She sings and dances to a wartime novelty song, using the puppet as a partner.

ELLA

Ven the Fuehrer says Ve is the master race Ve heil, pffee! heil pffee! right in the Fuehrer's face.

Now Tom dances with the Tojo puppet as he sings.

TOM

You're a sap, Mr˙ Jap, to make a Yankee cranky, You're a sap, Mr˙ Jap, Uncle Sam had better spank ye!

Tom and Ella tap-dance their way off right as Victor and Takeshi enter from left.

TAKESHI

Where's the Sensei now?

VICTOR

I heard the FBI picked him up.

TAKESHI

What for? He didn't do anything.

VICTOR

Hell, maybe he was a spy.

TAKESHI

Get off it.

VICTOR

Why not? He might've been planted here.

TAKESHI

Hey, you're talking about the Sensei. He wouldn't do something like that.

VICTOR

I don't know. I wash my hands of him. He means nothing to me.

TAKESHI

He treated us like sons, what're you talking...

VICTOR

Every man for himself, damn hakujins are out for blood, our blood. If we...

Takeshi doesn't listen. He runs up the platforms upstage center and is met by Tom, Ella and Scott holding hakujin puppets. Tom hits Takeshi, who goes down to the ground.

TOM

Whatta we got here, guys, a real live Jap. I been itching to get my hands on a Jap's scrawny neck. Looks like I get my Christmas present early this year.

Tom and Scott use the puppets to beat up Takeshi, while Ella sings and dances to "You're a Sap, Mr˙ Jap"

again.

Victor sees what's happening from stage left, but he doesn't do a thing. Tom now stops, puts his puppet away and goes to Victor.

TOM

Why didn't you help him? Why didn't you fight? Why'd you let them herd you away to concentration camps without doing a damn thing!

SCOTT

Give 'em a break, man.

TOM

It's guys like him who sold out the Issei and Nisei; turned their backs on their own people and groveled to the hakujins.

SCOTT

It was a long time ago. Forget it.

TOM

Forget nothing.

SCOTT

What would've made you happy? Blood? Issei, Nisei blood flowing on American mean streets? What good would it have done?

TOM

Hate for hate, blood for blood, standing up for honor, justice to all Americans, regardless of color.

SCOTT

What do you think we have now?

TOM

We have assimilation, we have the invisible minority, the model minority, the silent minority, the ignored minority. We have quiet shame, we have inner fears, we have yellow inhibition, the yellow plague of reticence, of knowing our place, of deferring to white supremacy. We have our image of harmless, do-as-you're-told children of obedience.

SCOTT

You're crazy.

TOM

We should've rioted, we should've burns cars, buildings, sat in the streets and refused to go. We should've had

Watts in 1942. Little Tokyo in flames before big Tokyo got it from Dolittle's bombers. Fire eating up downtown L˙A˙ from Alameda to Hill Street, from First Street to Ninth Street. A yellow inferno to show we did not go gentle into that dark night of betrayal!

SCOTT

You would've destroyed Issei, Nisei and Sansei.

TOM

Were the blacks destroyed after Watts?

SCOTT

That was another time, another people. We're not black.

TOM

No. We're yellow, as in yellow bellies and a yellow streak down your back!

Scott makes a move toward Tom, but Ella quickly comes between them.

ELLA

It's Takeshi. He needs help.

Takeshi gets up staggering. He takes off his shirt. Tom gets an Army jungle-camouflage uniform and helps Takeshi put it on. We see him now as an American soldier. Ella begins singing "Apple Blossom Time." Takeshi gets a radio transmitter from Tom and goes down the platforms to stage level, listening on earphones.

ELLA

Hi, GI˙ Lonesome? Sad? Why stay in the jungle fighting a war you don't need. It's not your war. Go home to your loved ones who want you safe and alive, in one piece. Go home, Joe. Go home to her arms, her lips, her body. She wants you. She's sitting by the window sill, waiting, hoping, remembering.

Ella finishes singing "Apple Blossom Time" and throws out streamers that drape over Takeshi. Just as the song is over, Scott begins beating the drum. Takeshi puts away the transmitter and tries to untangle himself from the streamers.

Tom enters from stage right, wearing a Japanese soldier's cap, round spectacles, affects a squinty-eyed, buck-toothed appearance in a Jap cartoon caricature. What Tom says here now is gibberish as a white person's ears might hear the Japanese language. Occasionally an intelligible phrase is heard.

TOM

(Gibberish Japanese)

What's your name? What are you doing in an American uniform? What was your job here?

TAKESHI

I don't know what the hell you're talking about.

TOM

(Gibberish)

Why do you lie? You are Japanese! You understand the language of your ancestors. We know you were interrogating our soldiers in Japanese.

(Understandable)

Why are you helping the Americans?

TAKESHI

Because I am an American.

TOM

(Gibberish)

You are Japanese, fool! Look in the mirror! Look at your parents! You are still part of the Japanese empire! Follow our emperor! Now!

(Understandable)

Where is your loyalty?

TAKESHI

With the good old USA˙

TOM

(Gibberish)

The Americans beat you, spit on your parents, send your families to concentration camps and still you call yourself an American? They don't deserve your loyalty!

(Understandable)

Help us win the war!

TOM

Nuts.

TOM

Nutsu? You are not good Japanese.

TAKESHI

I am a good Japanese, therefore, I am a good American.

TOM

Nani? Baka! Baka! Baka! Baka!

Tom whacks Takeshi with an imaginary stick. Takeshi, kneeling, stoically absorbs the punishment.

Ella emerges from upstage singing a Japanese military song, carrying a Japanese flag and the Tojo puppet. While she comes down stage right, Scott comes down stage left carrying an American flag and a puppet of Gen˙ MacArthur, singing the Army "Caisson" song.

Tom joins Ella and takes the Tojo puppet falling in line behind her and also singing. Takeshi maneuvers himself in a zigzag pattern as if trying to escape. He eventually does so as Tom and Scott come face to face.

ELLA

Truce.

(Pause)

Victor's coming.

All three exit with the puppets and flags. Victor enters in his brand-new gi and black belt from stage left. He goes through some simple karate movements. Soon Tom, Ella and Scott reappear.

TOM

Victor, you look great--in that gi.

VICTOR

Yeah, I know. Brand new. You know how much it costs nowdays-fifty bucks. But it was worth it. You gotta get the really white gi, the material is heavier, makes a good sound when you punch or kick. Pop! Snap! Yeah, I like the way I look.

TOM

You bought the black belt too?

VICTOR

Of course. Too new though. Wait till it gets used a bit, beaten up, frayed on the edges. The older the better. Looks impressive, means you've been around a long time. A real veteran.

Victor resumes some movements. Takeshi enters from right, warms up.

TAKESHI

How's it going?

VICTOR

Okay, okay. Hey, thanks for letting me work out in the dojo by myself.

TAKESHI

No problem.

VICTOR

I don't want your students to see a black belt like me stumbling around, you know.

TAKESHI

Don't worry. Any time you feel like joining a class, let me know.

VICTOR

Yeah, thanks. You figure I can regain my old form?

TAKESHI

Sure. Just keep at it.

VICTOR

Do me a favor, tell that to Millie. She's not too happy with me coming back to karate. I shouldn't have given it up in the first place.

(A beat)

What would you say if I told you I want to become a karate sensei like you.

TAKESHI

What for?

VICTOR

I feel I need it, you know.

TAKESHI

You got your business.

VICTOR

I'll hire somebody to run it. Or maybe my son might want the business. Me, I can feel the old karate spirit coming back. I'm not kidding. Just fooling around here, I get my juices flowing and I remember how it was. Sensei used to run us ragged, hitting our legs with the wooden sword when we didn't get the stance right or were lazy, all those things. Damn, it was like training for war. Brutal. Go, go, go. No mercy, man. Die, die, die. We were tough, right?

TAKESHI

Sensei taught us well.

VICTOR

I don't care if he was a spy or not.

TAKESHI

He wasn't a spy.

VICTOR

You remember the FBI came and took him away.

TAKESHI

They took a lot of innocent people away.

VICTOR

So okay, he wasn't a spy.

TAKESHI

I gotta get ready for a class.

VICTOR

Yeah. Oh, don't forget dinner.

TAKESHI

I'll be there.

VICTOR

See you.

Victor exits left.

TOM

Okay, sensei, what're we learning tonight?

TAKESHI

Heian Ni-dan.

Takeshi goes through the kata at medium speed. While he is going through the movements, he is questioned by the trio who remain on the platforms.

TOM

You ever kill anybody, Sensei?

TAKESHI

Only in the war.

TOM

In the Pacific.

TAKESHI

With the empty hand.

SCOTT

Not with karate?

TAKESHI

Kara--empty. Te--hand. Kara-te.

TOM

How many did you kill? A dozen? Two dozen?

TAKESHI

One. A Japanese officer.

SCOTT

Quickly, instinctively. No time to think.

ELLA

You really didn't mean to kill.

TOM

Of course he did. It was war. Kill! Hate! Kill! Kill! Hate! Hate!

ELLA

Stop it!

Takeshi exits right. Millie enters left.

MILLIE

Takeshi's going to be here soon.

Victor enters, carrying his shoes.

VICTOR

I know, I know. Ah, I'm going out to get a bottle of sake.

Victor begins putting on his shoes.

MILLIE

What for? We have wine, beer, hard liquor.

VICTOR

This is a special occasion.

MILLIE

But he may come before you return.

VICTOR

So? Talk to the guy. No, really, he loves sake. Ask him how good I was in the old days of my young days.

Victor exits.

MILLIE

Victor!

(Pause)

Karate... Takeshi.

ELLA

Taaa--keee--shiii. Ta-ke-shi.

Lighting should indicate a fantasy sequence. Takeshi enters from left without a shirt. He grabs Millie from behind; she turns and kisses him passionately.

SCOTT

That's a little much, don't you think?

ELLA

The woman has passions, leave her alone.

SCOTT

It's embarrassing to see her like that.

ELLA

Why?

SCOTT

Because she's a Nisei mother and Nisei mothers don't act that way.

ELLA

Japanese women can make passionate love. They aren't just saintly mothers and dutiful daughters. They're lovers, too, consuming, giving, yielding, soft, moist, gentle, ravenous, insatiable.

SCOTT

Come on, that sounds disgusting.

ELLA

I like it.

SCOTT

She's not your mother.

ELLA

That's how I want my mother to be.

Millie kisses Takeshi all over his body.

SCOTT

CHEEEZZ!!

Ella kisses Scott hard on the mouth.

ELLA

Did you like my tongue? In a lover, it's a sexual instrument. In a mother, a tongue only wags and nags, is that right?

VICTOR

(OFFSTAGE)

Millie!

Takeshi leaves upstage left. Victor enters stage left with a large sake bottle.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

See, Takeshi didn't come yet.

MILLIE

No.

VICTOR

What's that smell? Not koge?

MILLIE

It's perfectly all right.

VICTOR

I don't want Takeshi to eat black pot roast. Shame.

MILLIE

Oh, don't act like a little old lady.

VICTOR

You made the namasu, right?

MILLIE

Oh no, I forgot.

VICTOR

I told you, Takeshi likes namasu.

MILLIE

Well, namasu doesn't go with pot roast. Why're you acting so nervous?

Victor starts arranging three wooden blocks to serve as a table and chairs.

VICTOR

I want him to see that you're a good wife.

MILLIE

Is that important?

VICTOR

Of course. Did you put clean towels in the bathroom?

MILLIE

Yes.

Victor sniffs the air. Ella makes a "meow" sound.

VICTOR

Damn. Where's the Lysol spray?

MILLIE

Why?

VICTOR

It smells in here; the whole house smells like a cat. You should give Sashi away, you know I hate cats.

MILLIE

Sashi doesn't smell up the house. It's your stale cigarette smoke.

VICTOR

Be like my mother.

MILLIE

What do you mean?

VICTOR

She knew how to take care of the home. We were poor but clean. She always kept our house clean.

MILLIE

I know, she was so clean you could eat out of her ash trays.

VICTOR

Don't make fun of her.

MILLIE

I was just stating a fact.

VICTOR

Takeshi was always impressed with how clean and fresh my mother kept our old house. And he thought her namasu was the best. Hurry up, make the namasu quick.

MILLIE

Too late.

Millie exits upstage left.

VICTOR

Go, go, do it, before Takeshi comes.

Takeshi enters from stage left.

TAKESHI

Sorry I'm a little late.

VICTOR

No problem. Sit here. I bought some sake. Wait, I forgot the cups. Millie, bring the big sake cups. Takeshi's here. I told Millie to make your favorite--namasu.

TAKESHI

You have a nice house.

VICTOR

Just a little shack. Got a good deal on it though. Worth about $20,000 more than when I bought it.

Millie enters.

MILLIE

Hello, Takeshi, how are you?

TAKESHI

Fine. And you?

MILLIE

Oh, I...

VICTOR

She's fine.

Victor pours the sake.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

You want this sake warmed up?

TAKESHI

No, no, like that is okay.

They drink.

MILLIE

Did you come from the dojo?

TAKESHI

Yes, I showered there and came right over.

MILLIE

You must be hungry. Dinner will be ready in a few minutes.

Millie exits.

VICTOR

After dinner, let's go out. Just you and me.

TAKESHI

What about Millie?

VICTOR

We don't want to take her to the bars, especially the ones I go to.

TAKESHI

I hate to leave Millie behind.

VICTOR

Don't worry about her. She'll wash the dishes, watch some TV, then go to bed.

MILLIE

(OFFSTAGE)

Victor!

VICTOR

Okay!

Victor motions to Takeshi and they exit upstage left. Tom and Ella rearrange the blocks.

TOM

Get ready to be the barmaid.

ELLA

Nothing doing.

TOM

They'll be coming soon.

ELLA

So what? You do it.

TOM

I can't play the girl.

ELLA

They do it in Kabuki.

TOM

This isn't Kabuki. Be reasonable.

SCOTT

You're the Asian studies expert. Here's your chance to relate to cultural heritage.

ELLA

You'll make a cute barmaid.

Victor and Takeshi enter from stage left and go to the blocks.

TAKESHI

This is the third club tonight. Last one.

VICTOR

Why? You worried I'm gonna drink you under the chair? Don't worry; aeh, listen, there's a real beauty here. Otomi-san! Hayo, hayo!

Ella pushes Tom.

ELLA

Don't be a spoilsport. Go.

VICTOR

Maybe you can take her home tonight.

TAKESHI

Nah.

VICTOR

Otomi-san! Sake, sake!

Tom holds the puppet with a Japanese woman's face and sashays out.

OTOMI-SAN

Konban-wa. Ma, Victor-san, mo drunk desu ka?

VICTOR

Me drunk? Never.

Scott and Ella get the sake and cups ready on a tray.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

This is my friend, Takeshi. Tomodachi.

OTOMI-SAN

Hajime-mashite.

VICTOR

Look out now, he's a karate sensei.

OTOMI-SAN

Maaa, honto?

VICTOR

Sure. Go-dan. Sit here. Oh, wait, sake wa?

OTOMI-SAN

Hai, hai, chotto matte kudasai.

Tom slinks back to Ella and Scott.

ELLA

You're doing great, Otomi-san.

VICTOR

What did I tell you. A real looker. These Japanese women are okay. I can't stand the Japan guys. Real snot-nosed assholes.

Tom returns with the sake and pours for the men.

OTOMI-SAN

Dozo.

All three now drink. Tom places the sake cup up to the mask's mouth and tilts the cup and head back in drinking.

OTOMI-SAN

You have a very handsome friend.

VICTOR

Who? Takeshi?

(Peers at him intently)

Nah.

OTOMI-SAN

Takeshi-san, why are you so quiet? Otonashii desu ne?

TAKESHI

Otomi-san, you are very beautiful.

OTOMI-SAN

Honto? Ma, jodan ne? Ho, ho, ho, ho.

VICTOR

Otomi-san, you have a famous name. My favorite Japanese song.

Victor begins singing "Otomi-san" in good-humored revelry. Tom starts dancing around with the puppet, in the exaggerated style of a geisha. Ella joins the singing as does Takeshi. At the end, Victor embraces Tom, or tries to. Tom twists away.

OTOMI-SAN

Dame-yo! More sake, ne?

Tom scurries off left to Ella and Scott.

VICTOR

Funny, eh. During the war we kill off their fathers, brothers, then marry the women and bring them home as war brides.

TAKESHI

What do you mean, we were killing them off? You never went into the Army.

VICTOR

So? Look at you, you were one of those armchair commandos, right? What the hell did you do, sitting in some office brushing up on your Japanese, waiting for the war to be over. If the Japs didn't start the war, if they kept in their place, hell, I would've gone to Japan and study and become a karate master. Instead of a stupid drapery store owner.

TAKESHI

Don't blame the war. You could've done what I did.

VICTOR

Yeah, I can't figure it. You never thought of becoming a sensei. You wanted to be some kind of dumb I forget what.

(Pause)

And you know what? The damn Japan Japanese think they're hot shit. You know those guys look down on us Nisei.

TAKESHI

Not all of them.

VICTOR

Enough, buddy, enough. They think our parents were the black sheep, the misfits, so they hadda come to America. And we're the Nisei, the second generation, no better than our parents.

TAKESHI

You know that's bull shit.

VICTOR

Sure, it's bull shit. But we get it from both sides, Tak, you know that. The hakujins look down on us as minorities, right? We're not white, so we're not real Americans. So what are we? We're nothing. Zero.

Tom enters from upstage left holding puppet of a white soldier and herding in Ella and Scott with a long band of elastic, from which they stretch outward on the stage.

ELLA

What did we do?

TOM

You bombed Pearl Harbor.

SCOTT

Not me, not my father or brother, not my mother or sister.

TOM

You're the enemy.

ELLA

We can't hurt you. We're Americans too.

TOM

You look like the enemy, that's good enough for me.

As Ella and Scott stretch out with the elastic, they encompass Victor and bring him in.

ELLA

Why put barbed wire around us?

TOM

To make sure you don't wander off and die in the wilderness.

SCOTT

You crazy? That's stupid!

TOM

Obey the law and no harm will come to you. It's for your own good.

ELLA

What should we do?

VICTOR

We gotta listen. We gotta do what they say. We're at their mercy. They might shoot us, or kill us.

TOM

Or worse.

Tom pushes his puppet against Victor.

TOM

(CONT˙)

That's right, Jap boy, we can do whatever we want with you, and you can't do shit. Pow! Pow! Scared you, eh. Right between the slanted eyes. Barbed wire to keep the animals in. Good enough for cattle, good enough for Japs.

Ella sings briefly in frustration, "Don't Fence Me In."

TOM

All right, all right! To prove you are loyal Americans, you can volunteer for the Army and die for your country, which has treated you with kindness and generosity.

Victor faces the audience with a determined look. He salutes smartly and runs to Tom for his medical exam.

TOM

(CONT˙)

4-F˙

Disillusioned, Victor goes back to his bar chair. Tom puts a Nisei soldier's face on the puppet now.

TOM

(CONT˙)

Okay, you Nisei dog faces, we're going up the hill to save the "Lost" battalion. A lot of good Texas boys up there need our help. Remember who you are and what you stand for! No turning back! Banzai attack! 100th Battalion! 442nd! Up the hill! GO FOR BROKE!

ELLA

GO FOR BROKE!

All three race to the taiko drums and start the "attack."

SCOTT

GOOOO FFFOOORRR BBBRRROOOKKKEEE!

Now Tom leads the first charge up the hill and falls back as if shot, and goes to a drum and resumes the drumming; Ella now makes the charge like Tom, and Scott will eventually follow. Lighting should be red to indicate a ferocious battle. Tom, in his last attack, will carry an American flag and capture the Hitler puppet, which he will drop upstage behind the platforms.

Then, joined by Ella and Scott, he raises high the flag in triumph. They begin singing "When Johnnie Comes Marching Home" in spirited fashion down the platforms to center stage.

However, Tom and Ella will soon stop singing while Scott continues for several seconds.

SCOTT

What's wrong?

TOM

What?

SCOTT

You went flat.

TOM

Nothing has changed.

SCOTT

We did the deed. The Nisei sacrificed their lives. What happened?

ELLA

Couple of years ago the 442nd had an exhibit of their history--the most decorated unit in the American military. It was in San Francisco, and people called up to say, Go home, Japs, you bombed Pearl Harbor. That's what happened.

SCOTT

They were cranks.

TOM

Didn't the Nisei prove their loyalty in the war? Do we always have to prove ourselves? You think they give a damn about us?

SCOTT

You're wrong, I know it.

TAKESHI

Come on, Vic, time to go home.

Takeshi helps Victor to exit left.

ELLA

After the war, when Takeshi came home, he went to a white barber, and the barber said, "I don't cut the hair of Japs" and spat on his face. How do you think Takeshi felt? He could've killed-but he didn't. He took it-silently. How did Issei and Nisei feel, with psychological wounds that never heal, that bleed and ooze and fester inside, living in a world where you always have to apologize for the color of your skin, the slant of your eyes, where you are always reminded that you are different, and therefore inferior. How do Sansei and Yonsei feel, knowing that their grandparents and parents were abused and intimidated and shamed--and for what?

SCOTT

I know, Ella, but don't be bitter. Don't go over to Tom's side.

ELLA

I'm taking nobody's side. I have my own feelings. It's just that when I come to Manzanar, I look around and I think, "How could they have done this to my mother?"

TOM

Ella, it's time for the religious service at the cemetery. Let's go.

Ella exits left.

SCOTT

You haven't won her over yet. She won't wind up on your side.

TOM

There are no sides to this. Only a circle. You'll see. Only a circle.

Tom exits with Scott following.

Lights dim to black.

END OF ACT I

Act 2

ACT II

A shakuhachi (Japanese flute) is played, sounding like the wind blowing across the desolate land, then the sound changes to that of a sagebrush tumbling across the landscape.

Ella, Tom and Scott enter from left.

ELLA

(To Scott)

We come to Manzanar every year. We fix the fence posts around the cemetery. We remember the dead, we honor their memory.

TOM

The Manzanar plaque by the old guardhouse is a remembrance too. It is now scarred by hatchet marks and gunshots. Others remember or cannot forget, do violence on the plaque and feed on old racism. Time does not heal all wounds.

SCOTT

It doesn't do any good to remember when you resurrect hatred too. Why not forget all and start fresh?

Tom brings out simple signs with the names of relocation camps. He will plant them emphatically into holes in the platform, as he calls them out.

TOM

Manzanar, California--10,000.

SCOTT

I am a Yonsei and I feel no chains binding me to an inferior status.

TOM

Tule Lake, California--16,000.

SCOTT

I can do what I want to do, and no hakujin is conspiring with others to hold me back.

TOM

Amache, Colorado--8,000.

SCOTT

Too many Japanese-Americans are paranoid about their ancestry.

TOM

Jerome, Arkansas--10,000.

SCOTT

We need to realize that hakujins have feelings too. They know what happened to Japanese-Americans was wrong, morally and legally.

TOM

Rohwer, Arkansas--10,000.

SCOTT

But to repeat it over and over, you'll only get a backlash.

TOM

Topaz, Utah--10,000.

SCOTT

I don't know the past, it means nothing to me.

TOM

Heart Mountain, Wyoming--10,000.

SCOTT

I'm an American. That's the only thing that matters--nothing else.

TOM

Minidoka, Idaho--10,000.

SCOTT

My friends are white. To them, I'm as white as they are.

TOM

Gila, Arizona--15,000.

SCOTT

I don't even eat with chopsticks.

TOM

Poston, Arizona--20,000.

Takeshi and Victor enter from upstage center.

VICTOR

I tell you when we get it from both ends and the middle.

TAKESHI

Who's the middle?

VICTOR

My son.

TAKESHI

What do you mean?

VICTOR

I break my ass to send him to school. I give him everything: car, education, the good life. Hell, I never had it that good.

TAKESHI

What you don't earn, you don't appreciate.

VICTOR

In the old days, my old man used to tell me, "What you gonna do with your life?" Now my son looks at me, like he's saying, "What did you do with your life?" Tak, how come everything turned around? Who changed the rules?

TAKESHI

Don't look at me, I never got married.

VICTOR

You were smart, you looked out for No. 1. Me, why the hell did I get married? Sometimes I feel like stuffing all the drapery in my storeroom down my son's throat and tell him to see if he can run the business. Then I'd go to Japan and study karate. But then I think, I hate the dumb shits over there, so I can't go. That's why I was so happy to see you. With you, I can go back to karate, the only pure thing in my life.

TAKESHI

Don't think karate can solve your problems.

VICTOR

Aeh, you're the karate sensei, you're not supposed to say that. Make me feel good, give me some mumbo-jumbo.

TAKESHI

It's just an ego trip for you.

VICTOR

No, no! You watch me, I won't let you down again.

TAKESHI

When did you let me down before?

VICTOR

I mean, look, I'm not too old. You're not telling me I'm too old.

TAKESHI

No, not that. What about your family?

VICTOR

They can survive without me.

TAKESHI

What would Millie say?

VICTOR

She'd understand. She doesn't like me the way I am now anyway. With karate, I'll come back in deluxe condition.

TAKESHI

Sounds like a midlife crisis.

VICTOR

Don't laugh, Tak. Come on, don't laugh.

TAKESHI

I'm not laughing. I just think you'll quit in a couple of months after this dream of yours fades away.

VICTOR

I'll show you. I'll start off slow, build myself up gradually. Then when I'm ready, step on the gas, look out here I come.

TAKESHI

Okay, just don't run me over. See you at the dojo.

Takeshi exits left.

VICTOR

Okay, man, okay. I'm gonna do it. At least. Sixth rank black belt.

He goes through some karate movements.

TOM

Victor, this could be the death of you.

VICTOR

No way. It will be the life of me.

ELLA

Poor Victor, why can't you be content as an upright citizen and generous family provider?

VICTOR

I don't know. But just once in my life I want to do something right. Just once I don't want to screw up or do the wrong thing.

He tries a double front kick and falls back to the ground. Sheepishly he slowly gets back on his feet.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

I want Millie to see me, too, the way I used to be.

Millie enters from upstage center in her bathrobe.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

Maybe it will change the way we feel about each other. She doesn't know it, but I do love her in my way. If she...

MILLIE

Victor, you talking to yourself again?

VICTOR

No.

MILLIE

Takeshi go home already?

VICTOR

Why'd you wait up for? I told you I'd be late.

MILLIE

You have a busy day at work tomorrow, I thought you'd come home early.

VICTOR

I can handle the hours.

MILLIE

At your age, you should conserve your energy.

VICTOR

You make me sound like I'm an old man. I just turned 50. Fifty is young nowdays.

MILLIE

Uh-huh.

VICTOR

What?

MILLIE

I didn't say anything.

VICTOR

Is Takeshi old, like me?

MILLIE

Of course not. Just look at him, he's in good shape.

VICTOR

Well, he's the same age as me.

MILLIE

It's not just biological.

VICTOR

Just because Takeshi is into karate, he becomes a glamorous figure. I know how it works with you women.

MILLIE

Karate has nothing to do with it.

VICTOR

You say you want a sensitive, caring man, someone who's not afraid to show his vulnerability, but the minute a guy like Takeshi shows up, you become a damsel in distress wanting to be swept off your feet. Isn't that right?

(A beat)

Millie!

MILLIE

What?

VICTOR

I said, isn't that right?

MILLIE

What is?

VICTOR

This.

Victor grabs and kisses Millie, who pushes him away.

MILLIE

Stop it! Don't! You smell.

VICTOR

So?

MILLIE

How many bars did you and Takeshi visit this time?

VICTOR

Just one. Takeshi loves those bar girls.

MILLIE

Don't lie.

VICTOR

Who's lying? He's a horny bugger.

MILLIE

I don't believe you.

VICTOR

Aeh, he's no saint. [...]He's[...] screw you if he had the chance.

(Pause)

No. Actually he wouldn't be interested in you. There are a lot of young bodies he can get, bodies that know how to give and take.

MILLIE

What's wrong with my body?

Victor exits upstage center. Millie takes off her bathrobe and reveals an exercise outfit. She comes downstage and begins doing some exercises. Ella follows Millie's exercises from her upstage position.

ELLA

I hate exercises. Tone up those muscles, lift those sagging breasts. Not even the derrierge is safe from harm. Oh God, save us from the depravity of gravity.

Millie doesn't react to Ella, of course.

ELLA

(CONT˙)

A woman's lot is depressing, don't you think? When she passes a certain age, her lot becomes a used car lot strewn with overgrown weeds and little red and blue flags fluttering in the breeze. But a man as he grows older, well, his lot is a Cadillac showroom with a beautiful blonde opening the door of a white Caddy inviting him in for a drive and whatever else his fantasy can create.

Millie continues exercising.

ELLA

(CONT˙)

Millie, you've had three men in your life: father, husband, son. Which is the more precious? Can you say? Is there a choice?

MILLIE

(Stops exercising)

I don't know. My father an Issei, my husband a Nisei, my son a Sansei. Each different and each alike. And each needs me for different reasons. My father in his dotage, my husband in his virility, my son in his infancy.

ELLA

How indispensable we women are. How wonderful our creation.

MILLIE

Now my son is grown up, in college, preparing to take his place in the adult world. My husband, Victor, he's kind of drab, isn't he?

ELLA

I wouldn't say that. He brightens up people's homes.

MILLIE

Of course. He owns the Do-Rite Drapery and Upholstery Co˙ Thrilling, huh.

ELLA

Did you know Victor in Manzanar?

MILLIE

No, we didn't meet until years later.

ELLA

Victor knew your father though.

MILLIE

Well, yes, slightly. You see, my father was a shoe repairman. He had a shop but lost everything in the move to Manzanar. Anyway, to keep busy he fixed people's shoes the best he could. He probably fixed Victor's shoes once.

MILLIE

What happened to your mother?

MILLIE

A man came, a hakujin, to talk to my father one day. He was a Quaker, a gentle man, a beautiful person. There were many like him who were very kind to Japanese. He drove my father and me to L˙A˙ to see my mother. I was scared. The hospital corridor was empty and dim, and I hated the smell, the silence. It was like a dream.

(A beat)

Then I looked through a door and I saw my mother. At least my father said it was her. She looked at me from a hand mirror. I couldn't go and touch her, of course. I just saw her face in the mirror. Her face-I couldn't tell if she was smiling or crying. I try to see her face now and it's vague, I want to remember but.... My father didn't have a picture of her, can you believe it? Years later, I asked him how come he didn't have a picture of them both. He said he had one of her in a kimono but he destroyed when the war broke out. My father used to say I looked like my mother. I don't know. I really don't. All I know is that was the first and only time I saw her--in a hospital far from Manzanar with a hand-held mirror.

TOM

All right, sensei, let's go! No mercy, all out!

Millie exits left as Takeshi enters from right. He is wearing his karate gi. He will conduct an imaginary class and go through the movements.

TAKESHI

Gedan barai, gyaku zuki! Yoi!

Tom, Ella, Scott beat the drums as Takeshi comes downstage and returns upstage in his movements.

TAKESHI

(CONT˙)

Age uke, gyaku zuki!

The cycle is repeated.

ELLA

Don't stop, sensei, all the way!

TAKESHI

Mae geri, yoko geri!

The same cycle resumes.

TOM

Second wind, sensei, we can take it.

TAKESHI

Mae geri, mawashi geri, gyaku zuki!

When Takeshi is finished, he faces the audience.

TAKESHI

(CONT˙)

Punch from kibadachi stance. Yoi!

TOM, ELLA, SCOTT

Yoi!

Takeshi counts and punches; Tom, Ella, Scott beat the drums with each punch, building to a frenzy, as all four give a loud kiai with the last punch.

At the end, Takeshi coolly comes back to his ready stance. Tom, Ella, Scott are exhausted. Takeshi kneels in meditation. Soon Millie will enter from right. Takeshi senses her presence and opens his eyes.

MILLIE

I was worried Victor might train too hard and get sick.

TAKESHI

I'm bringing him along slowly.

MILLIE

Three times a week, that's not too much?

TAKESHI

No.

MILLIE

He keeps saying he's going to be better than he was in his youth.

TAKESHI

Back in the '40s, he was good. Fast, decisive, confident. It's true what he says. He used to beat me all the

time.

MILLIE

Can he beat you again?

TAKESHI

That would be tough.

MILLIE

That's what he wants to do.

TAKESHI

Well, in a few years maybe. But not after three months. His muscles are tight now. Muscles have to be retrained. It'll take time.

MILLIE

Well, anyway, I wanted to check for myself.

TAKESHI

How about you?

MILLIE

Me?

TAKESHI

You must train regularly. You look in pretty good shape.

MILLIE

Oh no, I mean, I do a little exercise at home, but it's not enough. Maybe I should go to one of those gyms?

TOM

(To Ella)

You look in pretty good shape.

He touches her thigh.

ELLA

Hands off, jerk!

TAKESHI

You could take karate too.

TOM

Want me to teach you karate?

ELLA

So you can get your hands on me?

TAKESHI

Why not?

TOM

Why not?

MILLIE

It's too physical for me.

ELLA

You're too physical for me.

TAKESHI

Good exercise.

TOM

Good exercise.

MILLIE

I'd get all sweaty.

ELLA

I don't look good in sweat.

TAKESHI

Sweating is good for you.

TOM

Sweat on women glistening on skin, salty, tasty, a real turn-on.

ELLA

Turn off, freak.

MILLIE

No, I'd be embarrassed. I'm really clumsy. That's what Victor says.

TAKESHI

All the more reason why you should take karate. Show him. I'll teach you--in private.

TOM

Let me teach you--in private.

ELLA

She's going to do it.

TOM

Never mind her. What about you?

TAKESHI

The secret of karate is practice and more practice. I'll show you. Well, maybe not. I'm the sweaty one.

MILLIE

No, that's okay, I don't mind. I mean, I'd like to see.

TAKESHI

Okay, bring your arm up and try to hit me. Go `head, I won't hurt you.

Millie does so. Takeshi blocks her arm lightly, then carefully twists her arm behind her back and wraps his left arm lightly around her neck as he stands behind her.

TOM

What a move, Mr˙ Slick! Let me try it on you.

TAKESHI

Once more.

Ella and Millie go through the same move with Tom and Takeshi. But Tom takes an additional liberty by placing a hand on Ella's thigh. She promptly stomps on his foot and gives a knife hand to his groin. Tom jumps back.

TAKESHI

See? Wasn't bad, huh?

MILLIE

No. Well, maybe. I have to go.

Millie exits right, followed by Takeshi. Victor enters from left and comes downstage, goes through some karate movements, more confidently.

ELLA

Victor's getting better.

TOM

His moves aren't as tentative.

Millie enters from upstage left in a slip, goes upstage center on platform. Victor turns and sees her. He moves in his best karate style, like a cat, to pounce on Millie.

MILLIE

Oh God, Victor. Don't do that.

VICTOR

What's the matter? Expecting someone else?

He snuzzles her.

MILLIE

Let go, you're sweaty.

VICTOR

You don't love my he-man sweat?

MILLIE

No. Go take a shower. What're you doing in your gi?

VICTOR

Practicing a little.

MILLIE

Victor, I was thinking. If karate is good for you, what about me? Maybe I should take karate too?

VICTOR

You? At your age? It's a little late for you to learn.

MILLIE

Not according to Takeshi.

VICTOR

When did you talk to him?

MILLIE

Today.

VICTOR

What for?

MILLIE

I asked about you. I was worried you might sick, a heart attack or something.

VICTOR

Me? Ha!

(A beat)

What did he say?

MILLIE

He said you were doing fine.

VICTOR

Sure. I'm doing great. I can feel it. The stretching, the movements, it's all coming back.

MILLIE

Then it's okay if I take karate too?

VICTOR

Karate is no good for women. Study aikido, if you like. That's better for you. Karate is mine.

MILLIE

Takeshi wants to teach me.

VICTOR

Okay, okay, if you want to learn, I can teach you.

MILLIE

It wouldn't be the same.

VICTOR

What do you mean?

MILLIE

It's like when you tried to teach me to drive.

VICTOR

The chemistry was right when I taught you everything you wanted to know about sex.

MILLIE

You were an impatient teacher then too.

VICTOR

I'm getting impatient now.

MILLIE

Then it's okay?

VICTOR

Okay what?

MILLIE

If Takeshi teaches me.

VICTOR

Yeah, yeah, just shut up and let's get down to business.

He pulls her off upstage center, as Takeshi enters from stage left.

TAKESHI

Otomi-san!

TOM

Your turn

ELLA

I don't want to go.

TOM

Hey, fair is fair.

Tom gives Ella a puppet with a Sansei girl's face.

TAKESHI

Otomi-san, sake please.

ELLA

Otomi-san isn't here.

TAKESHI

Sick?

ELLA

No. She went back to Japan.

TAKESHI

Funny, she didn't say anything the last time.

ELLA

Well, it was really last minute. She missed Japan, I guess.

TAKESHI

You Sansei?

ELLA

Ah, yeah.

TAKESHI

How come they let a Sansei work as a barmaid?

ELLA

I don't know. Free country. Gotta earn an honest living.

Takeshi turns to leave.

ELLA

(CONT˙)

Wait. Otomi-san told me about you. She said you were a karate sensei but you really wanted to be a poet.

TAKESHI

She said that? I don't remember telling her.

ELLA

Sure you did. Think back. You loved poetry. Remember? Poems of America, that's what you wanted to write. Before the war, you dreamed about...

Takeshi remains silent.

TOM

Takeshi, don't forget. It was an important dream in your life once. Tell how you felt in those days.

Takeshi sits but says nothing.

TOM

All right, Takeshi, we writers have to stick together.

Tom stands directly behind Takeshi.

TOM

(CONT˙)

Nisei just can't express their emotions; it's a shame. Takeshi, like this, I'll say it for you.

(A beat)

I wanted to ride the rails of America, to see the wonders of the land and its people. I wanted to lasso with Texas cowboys, to bucket sugar maple with Vermont farmers, to mark twain with Mississippi pilots; to shake hands and hug my fellow Americans, because this was the land of my birth, and I loved it. But the war came, and my fellow Americans looked at me and saw a Jap, a Nip, Tojo's cousin.

ELLA

(Lowering the puppet)

So the poetry died with the dream.

TAKESHI

If they hated the lines of my face...

TOM

... how could they love the lines of my poetry?

ELLA

So you turned to karate, the poetry of violence.

Takeshi looks at Ella, then exits stage left. Millie enters from right in gi and white belt. Victor enters in his gi from upstage left. Millie goes through simple karate movement; Victor takes his kibadachi stance.

SCOTT

What was that about?

ELLA

I tried to evoke a remembrance of things past.

SCOTT

His past should remain buried. He probably was a bad poet. A primitive, most likely.

ELLA

Maybe not. He had passion, he had that sense of wonder and curiosity.

SCOTT

But let's face it, his poems would've been an embarrassment. Okay, maybe for sociological reasons, you read his poems and say, "Ah, a Nisei poet, we had one in those days." But be honest, you know his poems would've been stilted, clumsy and boring.

ELLA

I didn't really see it till now, but you are a stuck-up shit. Treasure of our history are waiting to be dug up, and you stumble around in a polar white-out, blind to so many things about our culture. There is a Japanese-American culture, fighting to stay alive, struggling against the apathy and ignorance of people like you.

TOM

Squirm, baby, squirm. Chew on it, choke on it, slide it down your gullet. Ingestion? You'll get no relief here. Lay it on him, Ella, he deserves every...

ELLA

Oh shut up!

TOM

I thought you were seeing the light, my light.

ELLA

Your flashlight has no batteries and Scott's has no bulb.

TOM

You're a dud!

(to each other)

SCOTT

You're a dud!

Takeshi returns in his gi and goes to Millie.

TAKESHI

You're getting better.

MILLIE

You're just trying to be nice.

Takeshi, in his instruction, will touch Millie at the knee, hips, shoulders, arms, etc˙

TAKESHI

(CONT˙)

In your gedan barai stance, keep your left leg straight at the knee. Okay. Let the power from your punch come

from the hips, not the shoulder. See? Push your right hip front in punching. Feel it? Good. And for now, keep your right leg stiff and strong for good balance.

MILLIE

I'm so terrible.

TAKESHI

You're coming along well.

Millie tries a gyaku zuki.

TAKESHI

(CONT˙)

Your first. You punch like a girl.

MILLIE

Well, I hope I'm a girl.

TAKESHI

In karate you actually hit with the first two knuckles, so in a sense, you're focusing all your power in a small, concentrated area. Don't stick your thumb out; curl it in. Don't bend your wrist, keep it straight. Yes. Don't forget now, the punch is a twisting motion, like this.

Takeshi demonstrates, holding and guiding her hand.

MILLIE

You're so patient with me. Are you like this with all your students?

TAKESHI

No, only the special ones.

MILLIE

I'm not special.

TAKESHI

Of course you are. Now when you punch, your shoulders should be square and facing front.

Takeshi and Millie go through a few basic motions silently. Tom goes to Victor.

TOM

I don't know, Vic, I think you're wasting your time in karate. Time has passed you by.

VICTOR

I got time.

TOM

At your age, you should plan for retirement. You're going the wrong way. You have no business being young again.

VICTOR

My body's changing. I can feel it. It's listening to me again. Stretch, stretch. Kibadachi stance, toes in, knees out. Solid, tighten your butt

(whacks his butt with both hands)

Okay. One thing about karate--makes your ass small. I hated that when I was young. Flat ass, I didn't like it. Only old men have flat asses. I mean, if you're going to have an ass, then have an ass. Rounded, solid, looks good in tight pants. In karate, you tighten your ass so much, it disappears behind your eyes. Kibadachi stance, toes in, knees out, squeeze your butt, tighten up, tighten up, tight, strong, solid!

TOM

All right! Sacrifice your ass for an indestructible kibadachi stance.

VICTOR

Damn right!

TOM

What about Millie?

VICTOR

Millie?

TOM

Yeah, you want her to lose her ass too?

VICTOR

She's embarrassing.

TOM

Why?

VICTOR

Taking karate, it's not going to do her any good.

TOM

Depends on why she's learning karate. It may not be for self-defense.

Millie exits right, leaving Takeshi to warm up.

VICTOR

She'll ge tired of karate and give up. Most of them do. Ninety percent never make it to black belt. Seventy percent quit after six months. Get rid of the slackers, survival of the fittest.

TOM

I think Millie's infatuated with Takeshi.

VICTOR

Possible.

TOM

You don't mind?

VICTOR

It wouldn't go beyond that. Millie's boxed in, she can't get out of her safe little corner of life. I know her, that's the truth. I live in the same corner. I've been married to her for I don't know how long.

TOM

Too long.

VICTOR

I didn't say that.

TOM

Trade her in for a new model. The warranty expired a long time ago.

VICTOR

No, she's all right. I don't blame her. I'm not the best husband in the world. It's easier this way. No commotion at home.

Victor punches from kibadachi stance lets out a kiai. Then he walks to Takeshi.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

What do you think?

TAKESHI

Let's see the back stance.

Victor takes the stance as Takeshi checks him. Victor's back leg trembles slightly.

TAKESHI

(CONT˙)

Keep the back leg steady.

Victor eases up and breaks the stance.

TAKESHI

(CONT˙)

What's wrong?

VICTOR

Nothing. I'm improving, you gotta admit that.

Takeshi sweeps Victor's front lef and Victor falls to the ground.

TAKESHI

Bad stance. I don't have to tell you that.

VICTOR

Before the war, you couldn't have done that to me.

TAKESHI

Before the war, you had a good back stance.

Takeshi exits right. Tom tries to copy Victor's back stance but like a neophyte.

TOM

Victor, bet I can hold it longer than you.

Millie enters.

MILLIE

How long you going to practice.

ELLA

(To Tom)

You're not doing it right.

VICTOR

Leave me alone.

TOM

Yeah, leave me alone.

Victor gives up; Tom keeps his stance.

MILLIE

Gave up?

VICTOR

You distracted me.

TOM

Don't distract me.

Ella ignores Tom.

MILLIE

Bad day at the dojo?

VICTOR

No. I'm okay. How you doing?

MILLIE

Fine.

Tom gives up his stance, unable to take the pain.

ELLA

Gave up?

TOM

You distracted me.

ELLA

How?

TOM

By ignoring me.

MILLIE

I saw Takeshi do Kanku Dai today.

ELLA

He was beautiful.

VICTOR

So what?

TOM

So what?

MILLIE

It was like a ballet, but very masculine. Lyrical, yet powerful.

VICTOR

I taught him that kata.

TOM

Taught him everything he knows.

MILLIE

You?

VICTOR

Yeah.

MILLIE

When?

VICTOR

Thirty years ago.

MILLIE

Oh.

ELLA

Ancient history but why embarrass him by saying so.

VICTOR

What do you mean, "oh."

TOM

History is history. It doesn't change the facts even if it's a thousand years ago.

MILLIE

Nothing.

VICTOR

Kanku Dai in exhibition is okay, but kumite, free-form fighting, that's more important. I can beat Takeshi in kumite right now.

MILLIE

Uh-huh.

VICTOR

You don't believe me?

Ella beats the drum lightly. Takeshi enters from upstage center and bows to Victor who responds. They square off in a slow, stylized combat, like a slow-motion dance. After a brief exchange, Victor scores a clean punch. Takeshi bows and exits right.

VICTOR

(CONT˙)

I think I'll challenge Takeshi to a kumite match.

MILLIE

Challenge? What do you mean, challenge?

VICTOR

I can whip him.

MILLIE

Oh, Victor, sometimes you can be so...

VICTOR

You don't think I can beat him?

MILLIE

Of course you can't. He's a karate master; you're a karate dropout.

VICTOR

You always have so much confidence in me.

MILLIE

Okay, make a fool of yourself.

VICTOR

Yeah, like the time I said I was going to start my own drapery business, and you said I was being foolish.

MILLIE

You could get hurt against Takeshi.

VICTOR

Once I wish you would back me up.

MILLIE

You don't think of the consequences. No, you just jump into anything that comes up and learn your lesson later. Like the time you were going to make a lot of money selling cemetery plots. A real dead-end that was.

VICTOR

You never believe in me.

MILLIE

Why should I?

VICTOR

That's right, why should you. You, of all people. Just like your father. A loser. Scared of your own shadow.

MILLIE

What're you talking about?

VICTOR

Forget it.

MILLIE

No, I want to hear. What're you trying to say?

VICTOR

Nothing.

Victor starts to exit left.

MILLIE

What about my father? Say it, say what you really feel, you coward!

Victor is gone. Tom gets a puppet and puts on a mask of Victor's face.

TOM

That's the trouble with Victor, he's really a nice guy under all that crust. I'll do it for him.

SCOTT

What for? Why hurt her?

TOM

Never mind, it has to be done.

ELLA

Do you really want to?

Tom shrugs and goes closer to Millie, standing on the platform.

TOM

Did your father ever talk of Manzanar?

MILLIE

No.

TOM

Why not?

MILLIE

I don't know. I never asked.

TOM

Because he was ashamed. Because he felt like a criminal, as if he had done something wrong.

MILLIE

He obeyed the law, he did what he was told.

TOM

Yes, yes, a gentle, caring man treated like a dangerous criminal. Forced to leave his wife behind.

MILLIE

He couldn't help that. She had TB˙ He didn't want to leave her. He loved her.

Tom lowers the puppet.

TOM

And you? Did you love your mother?

MILLIE

Me? Of course. But I only saw her once in my life.

TOM

And she died a few days later.

MILLIE

Yes, yes, I told you that already. I was at Manzanar and it was my birthday, so my father gave me money to buy a bottle of Coca-Cola. It was a treat and I was happy.

TOM

Then a Japanese woman came up to you...

Ella brings a puppet bearing the fierce face of an older Japanese woman.

ELLA

Why are you laughing and having a good time? Shame on you! Your mother died today and you act like nothing happened.

MILLIE

My mother died? That lady in the hospital?

ELLA

Bachi!

Ella returns to her original spot.

MILLIE

It's not my fault. I didn't do nothing. I didn't know her. It's my birthday today, it's my birthday. I don't care about her.

SCOTT

It's not right, Ella. Help her.

Ella goes to Millie with a puppet showing a white woman's face.

ELLA

Now, honey, don't cry. You're a big girl, and a pretty girl in pigtails. It's not good to cry. We must change how we feel. There's a new world out there for you. But we must change your name. Why don't we call you Millie? How's that? Pretty name, isn't it? My aunt's name was Millie. It's a good American name.

Ella moves away with the puppet.

TOM

But Millie isn't your name. Your real name is Mieko. What's wrong with Mieko, it's a beautiful name. The hakujin lady could say Mieko, it's not hard to pronounce.

MILLIE

Well, it's a Japanese name and she didn't want to use it. And I needed an American name. After all, we were Americans too back then.

TOM

Of course. That's why you weren't trusted, why you were put in concentration camps--because you were Americans--Americans with names like Sadao, Kenji, Hideki, Suzue, Setsuko, Katsumi.

MILLIE

Well, anyway, I like the name Millie.

TOM

Willy-nilly, willy-Millie.

Millie exits left. Takeshi enters from right and Victor from upstage left.

VICTOR

Thanks for giving me this kumite workout. Don't hold back because it's me.

TAKESHI

Sure.

They bow and square off. Right away Victor is feeling intimidated. He is edgy, nervous, moving around too much. Takeshi is calm with a piercing look. Their attitudes are opposite from when they were youths in the Forties.

TAKESHI

Go `head--attack. Be aggressive. That's how you used to be.

VICTOR

Yeah, right.

Victor makes an Oi-zuki attack but before he moves even half way, Takeshi counters with a swift front kick into Victor's stomach.

VICTOR

That was good. Nice.

TAKESHI

Once more.

VICTOR

I don't know, maybe I should practice some more.

TAKESHI

Again.

Takeshi fakes an attack, and Victor jumps away, a humiliating act by Victor and he knows it. He tries a kick attack but is too slow to catch Takeshi, who sidesteps him easily and counters with a clean punch.

TOM

Victor needs help.

ELLA

What kind of help?

TOM

SENSEI!

Takeshi turns his head upstage, momentarily distracted. Victor quickly tries a roundhouse kick, but Takeshi recovers and blocks Victor's attack, then pursues him with a fierce charge, causing Victor to fall to the ground defenseless.

VICTOR

Wait, Tak, wait. I'm sorry. I didn't know. It was a mistake.

TAKESHI

I should never have taken my eyes off you. It won't happen again.

VICTOR

You know what happened. I didn't... I just...

Takeshi bows to Victor, then exits right.

TOM

Victor, what a move.

ELLA

You tricked him.

TOM

As Lord Naoshige said to the samurai...

SCOTT

Who?

TOM

Nabeshima Naoshige, a 16th century lord. As Lord Naoshige said: "Common sense will not accomplish great things. Simply become insane and desperate."

Victor exits upstage left.

SCOTT

I don't understand you. First, you seem to be for the Nisei, then you knock Victor.

TOM

Victor deserves what he gets, and he'll get what he deserves.

SCOTT

Fine with me. I'm not hung up over Issei, Nisei heritage. I'm American, not Japanese.

ELLA

I look at your face and I see a Japanese.

SCOTT

Don't you see, Ella, that's the way it has to be. Assimilation. That's the American way. We blend into the mainstream of society, we intermarry, the blood of many races flows together, including the Japanese.

ELLA

That's not the point. You can do that and still retain pride in your ancestry. That's what I'm talking about.

TOM

He can't do it because he's not proud of his race. Isn't that right, Scott?

SCOTT

Wrong.

TOM

Then why do you deny your people, your heritage?

SCOTT

Because it's not important in the context of my life.

TOM

You'll always be different. No matter what you do, there will come a day when the fact that you are a minority will shock you in a way you never expected.

SCOTT

Get off my back. I don't need you. I can stand alone. I can handle my own problems.

TOM

I am Japanese and American too. But I'm not blind to the racism in our society. It was there for my

grandparents, my parents and me. It will be there for my children and grandchildren. It will always be "you people did this, you people should go back where you came from, you people don't belong here, you people are a disgrace

(jabbing a forefinger into Scott's chest)

you people, you people, you people...

SCOTT

That's it, I've had it with you.

Scott jumps down from the platform, takes a boxing stance.

ELLA

No, Scott.

SCOTT

He's looking for a fight, I'll give it to him.

TOM

I won't fight you, Scott, because you aren't my enemy. As much as I hate what you stand for, I am still your brother in spirit.

SCOTT

Don't give me that baloney.

TOM

All right, if you want a fight, you'll get it.

Tom exits upstage center.

ELLA

(To Scott)

Isn't that the way it always is. Japanese fighting each other, Asians against Asians, minorities versus minorities, accusations, jealousies, squabbling over a tiny piece of the American pie, scratching over the crumbs we get thrown at us. How come he got that and I didn't? I deserve it more 'cause I'm smarter. Great white father, it's not right. Oh, Scott, it's such a small piece of the pie, and we have to fight over it like selfish children. It makes me sick.

Light changes as Tom appears with Phorbas puppet.

PHORBAS

Here I am, Phorbas, killer of pilgrims! I want you! Come, do your worst with me. I fear no one, especially you!

Tom thrusts a staff toward Scott.

SCOTT

Watch it!

Tom swings the staff at Scott, narrowly missing him.

ELLA

You're going to hurt him!

PHORBAS

Fight me! Defeat me! Teach me a lesson! Kill me, if you can! I am your enemy! I rape your women, rob you of your manhood, steal your children and teach them my ways and they belong to me forever!

Tom goes after Scott menacingly.

ELLA

Victor! Help! Victor!

Victor emerges from upstage left.

PHORBAS

SENSEI!

Tom lifts the puppet high in the air, twirls it around, pumps it up and down.

PHORBAS

(CONT˙)

Sensei, it is my pleasure to meet you. I have heard many fine things about your prowess. My name is Phorbas.

VICTOR

Who do you want?

PHORBAS

You, sensei, I want you. A kumite match, if you please.

VICTOR

You don't mean me.

TOM

Sensei, don't be modest. You are well known as a fierce karate fighter. I came to your dojo for a challenge.

VICTOR

My dojo? Oh, I understand.

Tom stalks the upstage area proudly with the puppet.

PHORBAS

You cannot deny me, sensei.

VICTOR

A kumite match? All right.

PHORBAS

May I warm up?

VICTOR

Please.

Tom throws the staff at Victor, who catches it. Tom goes through a battle dance, using the puppet as a weapon. Victor practices with the staff.

PHORBAS

Sensei, I am ready.

VICTOR

All right.

They bow to each other, then begin the kumite. Tom uses the puppet as a lance, thrusting and blocking. Tom makes a dazzling whirlwind attack, forcing Victor back. But Victor immediately counterattacks, and for a brief moment makes a heroic battle.

The kumite soon ends, however, when Tom thursts the puppet stick into Victor's stomach, once, twice, three times. Victor crumbles to the floor.

PHORBAS

Thank you for the match, sensei. You were a worthy opponent but no match for me. My skills in karate will become legendary someday.

Tom takes the puppet upstage and puts it in its slot.

SCOTT

It had to happen this way?

ELLA

Yes.

SCOTT

I don't understand.

ELLA

Tom couldn't change it. It happened the way it happened.

Victor struggles to his knees, facing the audience.

SCOTT

Why'd you do it, Victor? Why did you pretend to be the sensei?

VICTOR

I wanted to tell Takeshi: "Aeh, Tak, I took care of the bum for you, don't worry." I could've beaten him. I was close. One move, split second faster and I would've nailed him. Damn. All my life I screw up. From way back, I always make the wrong move, do the wrong thing.

TOM

Like what? Say it, Victor.

VICTOR

Like when I called the FBI about sensei. I don't know why I did that.

ELLA

You were confused. The wartime hysteria, the propaganda.

TOM

He's hemorrhaging.

ELLA

No one to help him.

TOM

He'll die alone, bleeding internally. A death in the dojo. Where he abandoned the art--and pursued the almighty dollar.

Victor slowly exits left, holding his stomach area.

ELLA

Dammit, you make me so mad.

TOM

Why?

ELLA

Because you're so cold, and unfeeling.

TOM

My trouble is, I feel too much. I can't help myself.

ELLA

And Victor? What about him? He couldn't help himself either. But at least he tried to build something constructive. So what if it was materialism. He gave the only thing he had of value: money he had earned honestly and all the things it could buy.

(more)

ELLA

(CONT˙)

You're the destructive one, saying only what you don't like, negative things that build nothing and go nowhere. I say Victor wasn't a loser and he kept his dignity the only way he knew how.

TOM

No, No, NO!

Tom grabs the Phorbas puppet.

PHORBAS

What can the Victors of the world do against me, Phorbas! I am indestructible. I rise, immortal, ready to chain the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free!

Tom aims the puppet stick at Ella's crotch area.

ELLA

What're you doing?

SCOTT

Stop, you don't have to do that.

Tom swings the puppet stick at Scott, causing him to fall. Tom goes wild, swinging the puppet in the air, then pursuing Ella and Scott.

PHORBAS

You will feel my anger and you will understand my power over you! You are forever my victim and I will enter you with all the fury I possess.

SCOTT

Takeshi! Takeshi!

Scott runs to the drum and beats in frantically.

ELLA

Takeshi, help!

Both Ella and Scott beat the drums until Takeshi appears in his white gi and black belt.

PHORBAS

SENSEI! SENSEI, I AM HERE!

Tom thrusts the puppet high in the air defiantly, shakes it, twirls it, pounds the floor. Then calmly, as if trying to contain its excitement, Tom stands very still behind the puppet.

PHORBAS

(CONT˙)

I unknowingly had fought your underling. But you are the champion, the one I came to challenge. Please do not disappoint me.

TAKESHI

Why should I fight you?

PHORBAS

Are you afraid?

TAKESHI

I don't need another test.

PHORBAS

It never ends, sensei. You must always prove your strength. You cannot let your guard down. I came to conquer, you cannot deny me. I am always here, lurking, shadowing, waiting for my chance to defeat once and for all, the likes of you.

SCOTT

Get 'em, Takeshi.

ELLA

Win, Takeshi, beat Phorbas, killer of pilgrims.

PHORBAS

FOOLS!! When I am through with the sensei, I will return to you. I'll step on you and crush you and make you beg for mercy. And I will give you none!

Takeshi advances toward Tom, who circles warily. Then suddenly Tom attacks with the puppet, Takeshi

counters, and the stylized battle in blue lighting is on. Ella and Scott beat the drums in accompaniment. The duel is more artistic than realistic in movement, but the two appear evenly matched.

The duel will end when Takeshi finally thrusts his fist into Tom's stomach. Tom lets out a piercing, agonized death scream, then remains motionless on the ground.

Takeshi hold the Phorbas puppet, looks at it, then throws it to Scott, who catches it. Takeshi exits right.

ELLA & SCOTT

We did it! We did it! We did it!

ELLA

Phorbas is dead.

SCOTT

Forever.

TOM

For the moment.

Tom gets up.

SCOTT

Didn't you learn? Takeshi beat Phorbas. The days of Phorbas are over. Why don't you leave?

TOM

You'll need me someday. I'll always be around: searching, probing, answering the call. It never ends, because injustice never ends.

ELLA

You know, you two are more alike than you think.

SCOTT

That's crazy.

ELLA

Yes, crazy. Don't you see? You, Scott, with all your talk about being a pure American--seeking to blend into the majority, making no waves, you're group-oriented, a very Japanese trait. And Tom, with your high-minded ideals about equality and individualism for us Asians--why that's the old Yankee spirit from pioneer days. You crazy, mixed-up, souped-up Americans of Japanese ancestry.

(A beat)

Scott, didn't you learn anything about yourself? Come on, admit something.

SCOTT

(Pause)

Well, I guess I am Japanese. But I'm also American. I can be one without denying the other.

(To Tom)

Is that enough for you? 'Cause if it isn't, I don't give a shit.

TOM

Okay by me, Yonsei.

ELLA

At least that's a start.

SCOTT

Ella, what happened to Millie after Victor died?

ELLA

Millie? Why, she's running the drapery business.

SCOTT

She okay?

ELLA

Of course. Nisei are survivors, fighters in their own way. Miyahara sensei, Kimura sensei!

Millie enters in her karate gi and black belt from stage right. Takeshi enters in his gi from upstage left. They bow to each other, then face the audience.

TAKESHI

Kanku Dai!

MILLIE

Kanku Dai!

Together Millie and Takeshi do the kata: powerful, clean, beautiful. Ella plays the shakuhachi, Tom and Scott the drums.

When Millie and Takeshi are finished, they stand poised and in their ready stance. The drums end in one loud boom.

Lights dim to black.

the end